

Cambridge Street Action Plan

A Report of the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee &
Cambridge Community Development Department

August 1997

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John Allen, East Cambridge Savings Bank
Manny Barros, 660 Liquor
Saul Bauman, Gore Street
Chuck Butera, Sew Low Fabrics
Fred Cabral, Berkshire Place
Jane Cawley, Vinfen Corporation
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Sal DiDomenico, Flowers By Sal, Jet-A-Way Travel (resident)
Nancy DiLando, Cambridge Street
Mary Duggan, Back Alley Theater
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Joseph Grassi, Spring Street, School Committee
Thomas Grayson, Marion Street
Joe Hardwick, Gore Street
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Karen MacDonald, Harrington Community School
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Eleanor Boschert (for Senate President Birmingham)
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CAMBRIDGE STREET STUDY

Project Area



Prepared by the Cambridge Community Development Department

0 50 100 200

CAMBRIDGE STREET ACTION PLAN

Revised Draft 7/22/97

INTRODUCTION

Cambridge Street is a unique district within the City of Cambridge which retains its historical pattern of people “living over the store”. This development pattern of housing over retail storefronts has created an especially convivial neighborhood life, retaining a feeling of community, of safe and active streets, and of neighbors knowing each other. Cambridge Street remains a port of entry for immigrants and of several generations of a family living and working in close proximity.

From the early 1900s until after World War II, Cambridge Street, particularly between Third and Warren Streets, was a strong neighborhood shopping area containing a variety of businesses such as small soft goods stores and markets. The commercial area along Cambridge Street between Lechmere and Third Street also prospered because of the presence of the Court House. Many of these businesses were operated by immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Poland. In addition to retail businesses, the Cambridge Street area contained many factories. The portion of Cambridge Street between the railroad tracks and Webster Avenue/Columbia Streets was one of the last to be developed. It was built up in the early 1900s, mostly with three-deckers and some brick buildings. Roosevelt Towers, the last major construction until the 1970s, was built on a vacant site in 1949.

Today, there are approximately 200 buildings on Cambridge Street in the project area, which runs along the Street from Inman Street to Lechmere Square. About half of them illustrate the area’s predominant pattern of ground floor business with housing above. While the Lechmere and Inman Square anchors serve a regional market, many establishments between these anchors serve the local market, including ethnic restaurants and specialty goods stores serving Cambridge Street’s long term residents, as well as more recent immigrants from such places as Brazil, Asia, and Ireland. The majority of the buildings along the Street have small floor plates, typically 800 to 1,000

square feet, are three stories high and are set on small lots. These facts, combined with a limited amount of parking, have protected it from large scale development. The continuation of this building scale is considered desirable.

Within the project area, the Street runs through the East Cambridge and Wellington-Harrington neighborhoods, as well as a portion of Mid-Cambridge. Both Area 4 and the City of Somerville are nearby. To a great extent, the Street’s special character derives from the diversity of the people who live and work there, including long-term Portuguese and Italian families, recent Brazilian and other immigrants, elderly, working professionals of wide income and age ranges, homeowners, and renters.

In the past, neighborhood planning studies have recognized the importance of Cambridge Street as a special corridor containing a mix of residences and businesses and as a source for providing goods and services to the neighborhood. In those studies, including the *East Cambridge Neighborhood Study* (1988) and the *Wellington-Harrington Neighborhood Study* (1996), the participants asked for protection of the neighborhood character, diversity, and mix of uses. The participants also asked for quality of life improvements, including improved street cleaning and safer streets for pedestrians and vehicles. A few years ago, concerned business people and residents in Inman Square formed the Inman Square Task Force to improve and generate interest in the Inman Square area, which includes a portion of Cambridge Street. The Task Force was able to accomplish several things, such as preparing and distributing a brochure of area businesses and a booklet of design guidelines (with suggestions to businesses of ways to make their storefronts more appealing to shoppers and pedestrians).

Because of the interest that was demonstrated by these residents, merchants, and property owners, the City decided to focus its attention on the Cambridge Street area. There were also many other issues and projects which encouraged the City to study Cambridge Street. The end of rent control on December 31, 1996 caused concern about the loss of residential units, as well as the change of character and uses in the corridor. Many upcoming projects will impact the area, such as the planned move by the East Cambridge Health Center from

Cambridge Street to Gore Street/Rufo Road, the development at 2 Canal Park, the construction of the new Frisoli Youth Center behind the Harrington School (to be completed September 1997), the traffic calming project being built on Berkshire and York Streets in Spring 1997, and the replacement of the 100-year old water main under Cambridge Street by the Water Department in 1996 and 1997.

Based on the extensive community participation that has taken place within the past year, it is clear that the Cambridge Street community is interested in seeing many types of improvements to Cambridge Street. In general, the residents and businesses want the project area to be clean, more attractive, and more appealing. The community wants the Street to be safer and more accessible for pedestrians. Moreover, the community wants to retain the character of the area by not displacing existing residents, by respecting the area's diversity, and by maintaining the overall building scale. Although space is limited, the community is concerned about parking availability, vehicle traffic, curb extensions, bike lanes, crosswalks, signage, and landscaping.

PROCESS

The Project Begins

Because of Cambridge Street's importance as a commercial corridor, the Economic Development Division of the Community Development Department was assigned the lead role and assembled a multidisciplinary project team which has the capacity to address needs related to housing, transportation, streetscape design, enforcement and public safety. In January 1996, work began on the Cambridge Street project. CDD staff immersed itself in learning about the Street and becoming familiar with the businesses, the people, and the layout. Field surveys were conducted of types of businesses, land uses, vacancies, building heights, street tree locations, and other physical conditions. The study area included the area along Cambridge Street between Inman Square and Lechmere, plus at least one block to the north and south. Early on, interviews were held with at least a dozen local leaders and business owners to begin to help CDD understand the issues and concerns of the community. In order to increase awareness in the Cambridge Street project and study area, it was discussed at neighborhood meetings, including the East Cambridge Planning Team and the Inman Square Business Association, and in the local press.

Surveys

With the assistance of some of the area leaders and merchants, CDD prepared a detailed business survey (see Appendix A). The business survey was executed in March and April 1996. It was hand delivered to all of the businesses within the study area. Out of approximately 200 businesses, a total of 54 completed surveys were returned. Nearly all of the responding businesses are located on Cambridge Street. Below is a breakdown by location:

- Inman Square to Prospect Street: 13
- Prospect Street to Windsor Street: 11
- Windsor Street to Railroad: 12
- Railroad to Third Street: 17

A survey of area residents (also prepared in Portuguese) was drafted and distributed in June and July 1996 (see Appendix B). Copies were sent to all residents of Cambridge Street between Inman Square and Lechmere, as well as distributed at large residential buildings such as Millers River Apartments and Roosevelt Towers, sent home with children in three area schools, passed out at festivals, churches, and a handful of local businesses, stuffed in mailboxes on side streets by volunteers, mailed to the members of the East Cambridge Planning Team, inserted in the May/June 1996 issue of the *East Cambridge News*, and handed out at the community workshop on July 1, 1996. More than 180 completed surveys were received. Respondents live on 40 different streets. More than one third of the respondents are Cambridge Street residents.

The Visioning Exercise

On Monday, July 1, 1996, CDD held a community workshop, "The Future of Cambridge Street," at the Harrington School (see Appendices C and D). Nearly 150 people attended the meeting, including residents, business people, property owners, staff from various City departments, and elected officials. Displays included maps prepared by CDD which illustrated some of the field survey data and exhibits prepared by Rindge School of Technical Arts students for their Spring 1996 "Faces of Cambridge Street" project (profiles of Cambridge Street business people).

After presentations were made concerning the project overview, field survey data, preliminary findings, and already identifiable challenges and opportunities, the attendees were divided into 10 groups (one of which was a group for Portuguese speakers) for a "vision exercise" and were instructed to consider the following questions:

- What is good about Cambridge Street now that should be preserved?
- What problems do you experience now in the Cambridge Street area? Are there special problems for children? For the elderly? For people with physical challenges?

- Imagine yourself walking along Cambridge Street in the future ... What do you see? What does it look like (buildings, store windows, sidewalks, pavement, other elements and features)? What kinds of activities, uses, stores and services are there?
- In what ways does Cambridge Street work as a whole? In what ways does it function in sections? What are the different sections of the Street?
- What would be the first things you would do to improve Cambridge Street?

Following the discussion, each group picked a representative to present its findings and suggestions to the rest of the attendees. At the end of the workshop, those interested in additional participation volunteered to work on an advisory group for the Cambridge Street area. In September, a report containing the workshop results was prepared and distributed to all participants (see Appendix E).

The Cambridge Street Advisory Committee

In August 1996, the City Manager appointed 38 business people and residents from throughout the neighborhood to serve on the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee. The Committee met approximately nine times between September 1996 and May 1997 to discuss the various topics that were raised at the workshop and in the surveys, including urban design, quality of life issues, housing, land use and zoning, business and economic development issues, transportation, and parking. Field and survey data, workshop responses, and additional information was presented and discussed at the Committee meetings (see Appendix F). CDD, with the help of a few Committee members, conducted a brief survey of usage of area municipal parking lots and a few blocks of on-street parking. Representatives from City and State agencies were invited to give presentations to the Advisory Committee and to hear their concerns. Officials from the City Council, State legislature, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Central Square Business Association, Community Development Department (including housing, urban design, neighborhood planning, economic development, transportation, and zoning specialists), Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department,

Cambridge Public Works Department, Cambridge Housing Authority, Cambridge Historical Commission, Cambridge Police Department, Cambridge Animal Control Commission, and Department of Human Services Positive Edge youth program attended the meetings. Many members of the public regularly attended and participated in the Committee meetings.

After a thorough analysis of the issues, the Committee broke into five subcommittees: Streetscape Beautification, Transportation, Housing, Zoning, and Marketing & Promotions to develop proposals to revitalize Cambridge Street. A total of nine subcommittee meetings were held to determine the goals, recommendations, and actions to consider related to these topics. The subcommittees reported their findings to the Committee and the Committee then reached consensus on the findings (which are contained within this report).

A second community-wide meeting was held on Wednesday, April 16, 1997 at St. Anthony's Church to allow the public to have the opportunity to comment on the Committee's recommendations, as well as to learn about the work that has continued on Cambridge Street since the workshop last July (see Appendix G). Approximately 90 residents, business people, property owners, and City staff attended. An update on the Cambridge Street project was given and then the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee and Subcommittee members gave slide presentations of the Committee's goals and recommendations. The attendees were divided into eight discussion groups to consider the Committee's goals and recommendations. A representative from each of the groups then presented to the rest of the attendees the top three things that the group participants liked the most about the goals and recommendations and three of the things the group wanted to see added or revised. The public was also given an additional 12 days following the meeting to send in written comments.

Following the community meeting, the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee met again and revised its recommendations, based on its review of the public comments. The revised recommendations are contained within this report. The format of the recommendations includes "goals," "recommended actions"

(which are actions which the City believes are likely to occur and/or are already occurring) and “actions to consider” (which are additional actions that were discussed by the Committee and may need further study or require action by other individuals or agencies).

Other Initiatives

A variety of other projects and actions have been or will be initiated as a result of the planning process:

- At the end of January 1997, the City launched the Cambridge Street Facade Improvement Program (to provide technical assistance and grant money to businesses and commercial property owners). The amount of \$150,000 has been appropriated in the fiscal year 1998 budget for the Program. To date, CDD has had meetings with nearly 20 interested potential participants, about 5 or 6 of whom have already met with or hired architects and are working with the Department to follow through with planned improvements to their storefronts.
- Last winter, CDD met with the East Cambridge Savings Bank and helped develop the Cambridge Street Facade Improvement Loan Program, which offers favorable terms for loans used to improve commercial and residential buildings located on Cambridge Street (the loan program will supplement and complement the City’s grant program). CDD has distributed copies of the Facade Improvement Program guidelines and Loan Program materials to more than 300 area businesses and commercial property owners.
- The Cambridge Department of Public Works installed an additional 16 trash barrels along Cambridge Street in April 1997, following CDD’s request.
- During the Summer of 1997, it is anticipated that the sidewalk in front of the Lechmere T station will be reconstructed by DPW and, thanks to a private donation, an additional 7 trees will be planted along the reconstructed sidewalk.
- The Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department plans to resignalize the intersections along Cambridge Street and First, Second and Third Street and at Sixth Street during Fiscal 1998.

- Traffic calming improvements are being built on Berkshire Street and York Street to slow vehicular traffic and make these residential streets safer for pedestrians.
- In addition, a capital request for \$150,000 is included in the budget for fiscal year 1998 (which fiscal year begins July 1, 1997) for funding and a request for proposals has been published to hire an urban design and transportation consulting team to consider the recommendations of the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee and to come up with a plan for physical improvements to the Cambridge Street study area.

URBAN DESIGN

Background

The Cambridge Street corridor's distinctive character stems in part from its physical layout. Most buildings are only two to three stories, are small in scale, have traditional architectural features, and contain apartments over businesses. There is a fairly consistent "street wall" of buildings along the sidewalk, creating a lively and inviting street and sidewalk area.

The majority of residents and business people in the Cambridge Street area report that they like and want to preserve the scale and character of the area, although they do want to see the physical appearance of the buildings and

streetscape rehabilitated, cleaned up, and better maintained. As one person put it, "[we want a] safer, more attractive version of what's there." Another said it is important to "maintain its ethnicity and neighborhood character." The neighborhood would like a more pedestrian friendly environment and would like to see the gateways to the area, Inman and Lechmere Squares, emphasized and made more welcoming. Many comment that there should be continuity in the treatment of the streetscape while others note that it is important to be aware that there are different sections of the Street which have different characters.

Below are the goals and actions of the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee for streetscape beautification.

Goals and Actions

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
1. Emphasize, through streetscape improvements, what is best, different, and exciting about Cambridge Street.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City should hire an urban design and transportation consulting team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City and its Consultant should work with the Committee to prepare a survey of existing conditions and to develop a coherent streetscape plan which would include trees, lighting, signage recommendations, seating (where appropriate), curb changes, parking, open space, etc.
2. Improve the appearance of Lechmere Station and the railroad crossing near Warren Street.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City and the MBTA should conduct a joint review of the Lechmere Station, including fixing up the exterior of the station building, replacing the existing fence with a more attractive one, and making other transportation and design improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City and its Consultant should look at ways to make the railroad crossing on Cambridge Street near Warren Street less distracting and less of a neighborhood boundary or border, without compromising safety.
3. Improve the Street and make it more inviting to pedestrians, including improving access for the elderly and disabled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City should review physical changes to buildings and sidewalks in light of the need to provide access for the elderly and disabled, in accordance with the State Building Code, Americans with Disabilities Act, and other applicable laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The City and its Consultant should make suggestions that will encourage pedestrian movement along Cambridge Street between Lechmere and Inman Squares, which may include new lighting fixtures (ones more sensitive to the scale of the Street and with improved lighting levels), additional trees, benches, and clear signage on buildings. The new streetscape scheme should be

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
		<p>continuous and consistent along Cambridge Street on both sides of the railroad tracks. The City should assess the condition of sidewalks along Cambridge Street and the need for cleaning and repair, including the sidewalks near Lechmere Station, and consider whether a sidewalk should be added along Max Avenue to Cambridge Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should consider removing the traffic signal poles at the Cardinal Medeiros Avenue/Cambridge Street/Warren Street intersection if they are to remain unused. • The City should consider placing public art in the Cambridge Street area (e.g., at the Lechmere gateway). • The City should consider placing utilities underground where currently above ground on Cambridge Street and side streets when construction is being done in the public right of way.
<p>4. Add more trees and landscaping, and make open spaces and parks more attractive and usable, in the Cambridge Street area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City will complete improvements which are underway at Silva Park. 	<p>The City should identify locations where trees could be added and determine the species of trees to be added in the Cambridge Street area, in order to establish edges and emphasize places. Proposals for trees should be considerate of merchants' needs. Different species of trees should be considered based on what may be appropriate to relieve particular concerns (e.g., blocking commercial signs), while planting of trees of a single species could be used to emphasize an area or to provide a consistent, unified image. Some suggested locations for additional street trees include near the Lechmere T Station, in front of off-street parking lots that front on Cambridge Street, and between First and Second Streets.</p>
<p>5. Create a continuous and consistent lighting scheme along Cambridge Street between Inman and Lechmere Squares which includes more attractive fixtures and better lighting levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should assess the existing levels of lighting and consider installation of new lighting fixtures along Cambridge Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should consider improving the lighting in Vellucci Park, Gannett Park (Jefferson Street), the park next to the railroad, and at the Harrington School. • The Committee should write a letter to the County to request that they provide dramatic uplighting of the facade of the Registry of Deeds in the evening.
<p>6. Improve Cambridge Street area signage overall, including more attractive commercial signs and the use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reviewing sign applications, the City should look at the size, scale, material, color, and style of the proposed signs in relation to the character of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City and the County should work together to fix up the historic information signs located in front of the Registry of Deeds, and the space around the signs, so that this feature could

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
<p>of banners to beautify the Street and make it more interesting and exciting, without creating conditions of “sign clutter.”</p>	<p>buildings and the surrounding area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should enforce the removal of defunct signs within a reasonable period of time. 	<p>become more of an amenity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should consider the idea of adding signs to indicate points of interest or major public destinations along Cambridge Street, as well as installing “school zone” signs near the Harrington School and directional signs for the Hospital. • The City Council should declare that the official name of the area commonly referred to as “Inman Square” is Inman Square, so that it can be so noted on signs and maps. • The City should consider the use of banners to make the Street seem more consistent, coherent and exciting. The design of banners should involve the City and its Consultant, the Committee, neighborhood youths, and the Cambridge Street Business Association (if created). • The City and its Consultant should evaluate the pros and cons of adding an information kiosk (possibly near Lechmere Station or at the small railroad park) which would have maps, signs, and other information for pedestrians and visitors.

QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

(Cleanliness, Maintenance, Noise, Safety, and Enforcement)

Background

While Cambridge Street area residents enjoy living on a busy street, they want to find ways to minimize problems like noise, truck traffic, vehicle speeds, and double parking. Many report that they want to see property owners and businesses taking more pride in the area and cleaning up sidewalks, making repairs, and improving property maintenance. Residents and business people have said that they would like to make the area feel safer through better lighting levels at night, better maintenance and improved appearance of properties, increasing police visibility, controlling drug sales, and reducing the number of people who hang out at certain locations and seem intimidating to passersby. Overall, residents and businesses feel that it is a relatively safe neighborhood with a good feeling of community.

In the business survey, on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), the average and the most frequent response rated the area an 8 concerning daytime safety and 5 and 6, respectively, for nighttime safety. Businesses reported that improved street cleaning and crime prevention are the two neighborhood services that are needed the most.

According to the resident survey results, residents feel that Cambridge Street is a little safer than the businesses do. The average response was 8 and the most frequent response was 10 concerning daytime safety. For nighttime, the average was 6 and the most frequent response was 8. The majority of residents say that they are not considering moving out of the area. Those that are thinking about a move report that they may do so because of issues such as the affordability of housing, congestion, crime, noise, lack of parking, and the region's climate.

Police Commissioner Ronnie Watson stressed to the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee that it is most helpful if the public tells the police the specific details concerning where and when a questionable activity is occurring so that they may set up specific patrols of "hot spots." He reported that there is actually very little criminal activity coming out of the Mall and going into the neighborhoods. Watson noted that the mobile units are actually doing a good job but understands the neighborhood's desire for better visibility of patrolling officers. He said the Department and the shift supervisors can be flexible and can vary routes, as well as suggest to the car patrols to park and walk more often for increased visibility, especially in target locations. The Commissioner said that he wants to minimize the amount of time that officers need to leave their patrol areas and the amount of time spent preparing reports in order to maximize the time on the street. Watson also stated that other City's goals are to expand the bike patrol and to hold community outreach meetings.

At the same meeting, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works Steve White spoke about cleanliness and maintenance issues in the Cambridge Street area. Concerning litter and dirt, he said that there are two employees who sweep the Street on a daily basis. Between March and December (depending on the weather), the Street is mechanically swept approximately three times per week (except where cars are parked). At this time, the Department of Public Works (DPW) does not want to clean the Street more frequently because of the issue of inconveniencing residents, businesses, and patrons more often by requiring them to move their cars.

Below are the goals and actions related to quality of life issues. Since many of the topics within this report are related, overlapping goals and actions may also be found in other sections.

Goals and Actions

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
1. Improve the cleanliness of Cambridge Street by reducing the amount of trash on the Street and improving the removal of dog feces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPW should seek to improve maintenance and clean up the trash at the railroad park. • Residents should report to DPW those properties where trash is put out earlier than permitted. • DPW has recently installed 16 trash cans. If needed following installation of the new cans, residents and the Committee should suggest other locations to DPW. • Residents should report incidents of graffiti to the City's graffiti hotline 349-INFO. • The City should consider providing Portuguese translation of trash and recycling information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPW should educate the public, including the neighborhood youths, regarding trash removal, the costs of littering, etc. • DPW should develop a new and comprehensive street cleaning program for Cambridge Street. As part of this program, DPW should consider changing street cleaning day to after (rather than before) trash pickup day. • DPW should consider changing trash pick up route so that all Cambridge Street trash is picked up earlier in the day. Also, DPW should assess the frequency of the emptying of trash barrels. • The Animal Control Commission should seek to better educate the public concerning pooper scooper and leash laws.
2. Improve the safety and aesthetics of municipal parking lots in the Cambridge Street area.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should assess ways to alleviate feelings of insecurity by evening users of municipal parking lots.
3. Improve enforcement of parking violations, including double parking (particularly in Inman Square), parking in crosswalks and bus stops, and abuse of visitor parking passes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPT should assess its enforcement of parking violations in the Cambridge Street area. TPT should work with the Police Department to coordinate enforcement during hours when TPT staff are off-duty. • Residents should report times and locations of incidents to TPT for targeted enforcement. 	
4. Improve enforcement of moving violations, including U-turns (particularly in Inman Square), speeding, violation of traffic signals and signs, and violation of truck restrictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Police Department should assess its enforcement of moving violations in the Cambridge Street area. • Residents should report times and locations of incidents to the Police Department for targeted enforcement. 	

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
5. Reduce the amount of noise in the evenings from ambulances, fire trucks, car radios and alarms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City should send letters to the Hospital and the Fire Department requesting evening consideration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents and neighborhood associations should send letters to the Hospital and the Fire Department requesting evening consideration. The Police Department should promote the use of a non-emergency hotline for reporting quality of life incidents. Residents should report times and locations of incidents involving quality of life issues such as loitering and noise to the Police Department for targeted enforcement.

LAND USE AND ZONING

Background

There are approximately 200 buildings on Cambridge Street in the project area, about half of which are mixed use, containing a combination of residential and non-residential uses. More than 70% of the residential and mixed use buildings contain three or fewer housing units. The majority of the businesses in the study area are service businesses, such as beauty salons, dry cleaners, travel agencies, and insurance agencies. Of the approximately 90 service businesses, more than 22 are beauty salons and barber shops. There are nearly 70 retail stores, as well as 18 automotive and industrial uses, located in the study area. Cambridge Street is well known for its restaurants. In fact, there are more than 40 restaurants and bars in the area. Along Cambridge Street, between Lechmere and Inman Square, there are approximately 26 establishments with liquor licenses, including at least 16 restaurants, five markets, and four clubs or cultural centers. At present, the amount of vacant commercial space is low, with approximately a dozen vacant commercial spaces (not all on the ground floor) totaling approximately 13,000 square feet.

The majority of residents who responded to the survey reported that they most often shop on Cambridge Street for its bakeries, banks, cleaners/tailors,

pharmacies, restaurants, and the post office. Several people commented that they like the existing mix of uses, in particular the diversity of businesses and restaurants, and the mix of housing and businesses (apartments over stores). Many residents would like to see fewer bars, liquor stores, clubs, beauty salons, and restaurants (particularly pizza and sub shops). Problems associated with establishments that sell or serve liquor include trash, double parking, fights outside of bars and clubs, and the need for more enforcement (to prevent and control those who are drinking from hanging out in building doorways). Instead, many specify that they would like to see more “quality” restaurants and cafés come to the Cambridge Street area, as well as coffee shops, an ice cream shop, an Italian restaurant, a diner or pancake house and a bagel store. Other desired businesses are various types of retail businesses, including bookstores, antique stores, produce markets, clothing stores, variety stores, and a theater or cinema. Business survey responses were similar. At the community workshop in 1996, participants said they would like another fish market, bookstores, gift shops, a copy center, family shopping places, specialty shops, cafés, an ice cream shop, and a farmers’ market, and fewer bars and liquor stores. Participants also suggested putting together more groups of small stores in buildings (as can be seen in Inman Square and a few buildings in East Cambridge).

While floor plate size is a constraint (many businesses have fewer than 2,000 square feet), it is protects the Street’s character as a district offering a variety

of uses owned by small business people. It should also be noted that while many expressed the need for more nighttime activities, particularly in the area between Willow and Warren Streets, there is a need to balance evening uses along Cambridge Street so as not to overload certain stretches (as some residents feel may be the case in Inman Square).

The basic purpose of zoning regulations is to control the use and size of buildings. The two primary zoning districts in the Cambridge Street study area are the Business A (BA) and Residential C-1 Districts. Most of the area along Cambridge Street is in the BA District, which is the least dense commercial zoning district in the City. Many people in the neighborhood favor the current scale and architecture of the buildings along Cambridge Street, would like to see poorly maintained and ugly signs removed, and do not want more large or “boxy” buildings constructed.

Most of the buildings in the Cambridge Street area are two or three stories in height; most are not higher than 35 feet, and many of the buildings have small floor plates, typically 800 to 1,000 square feet. The size of a lot often dictates the character, bulk, and density of what is built on it. Still, the zoning regulations may allow uses and building sizes which are different from those which currently exist. For example, there is currently a height bonus in the BA District for residential projects which permits a maximum building height of 85 feet (approximately eight stories) instead of 35 feet (the limit for non-residential buildings). Many individual properties would be too small to accommodate such a tall building while complying with other building and

zoning requirements. Three-quarters of the lots in the Cambridge Street area are smaller than 5,000 square feet in size. With the end of rent control, there is a concern that lots may be redeveloped to a larger scale than has been typically seen in the past but that is permitted under current zoning (this may include combining lots and demolishing existing buildings in order to construct a building that could be 85 feet in height). In order to protect the physical character (both building style and scale) of the Street, the Committee wanted to reduce the probability that a number of small lots would be assembled, existing buildings torn down, and large buildings of a scale, bulk, and style that is different from the overall Cambridge Street character would be developed. In addition, the Committee wanted to protect the area’s character by creating an overlay district for which design guidelines would be developed.

Another area of concern in the Cambridge Street corridor is signage. Zoning can control the dimensions, size, location, and lighting of signs. Many signs on Cambridge Street legally predate the current restrictions and are therefore permitted to remain. However, if a business is closed for a certain amount of time, the City can enforce the removal of signs that do not conform to the zoning requirements. There are also cases of illegal signs in the area. For example, while there are limits to the percentage of window area permitted to be covered with signs, this restriction is often exceeded, giving a cluttered and uninviting appearance to a storefront.

Goals and Actions

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
1. Develop a framework for the Cambridge Street community to use the tools of zoning to protect the character of the Street.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDD should form a zoning advisory committee (ZAC) to work with CDD staff to formulate specific proposals for modifying the existing zoning and/or for developing an overlay district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZAC should consider recommending the establishment of an overlay district for the Cambridge Street area.
2. Retain the characteristic scale and style of buildings on Cambridge Street.		<p>ZAC should consider recommending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the reduction of the residential building height bonus to a scale which is in keeping with the character of the Cambridge Street area and which will not encourage the assembling of lots and demolition of existing buildings in order to accommodate large scale developments; the creation of incentives if buildings determined to be of historical or architectural importance in the Cambridge Street area are not demolished in the process of accommodating new construction on the property; the creation of guidelines for building materials, colors, and textures in support of the goals and objectives of the overlay district.
3.. Maintain and enhance the “street wall” and create a pedestrian friendly environment.		<p>ZAC should consider recommending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the revision of the zoning regulations to encourage nonresidential uses on the ground floor of buildings on Cambridge Street and could require active ground floor uses (e.g., not parking) for a certain depth of the portion of a building fronting Cambridge Street; the addition of a requirement for a minimum and maximum percentage of transparent glass area (i.e., windowed) for building storefronts, similar to the North Mass Avenue Overlay District; the addition of a requirement for principal building entrances to open onto Cambridge Street and for individual building entries to be required for all stores abutting Cambridge Street; the addition of a minimum building frontage requirement, possibly in combination with an increased floor area ratio.

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
4. Reduce the visual impact of off-street parking along Cambridge Street.		<p>ZAC should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reexamining the off-street parking requirements for uses in the Cambridge Street area; • the creation of a policy that no off-street parking or loading shall be required for properties containing buildings of more than a certain age or for properties on which there will be new construction of exceptional design and quality in character; • the addition of a requirement that the area between the building and the front lot line (sidewalk) be made up only of additional sidewalk area and/or landscaped area (i.e., no off-street parking between the building and the street); • the addition of a requirement that off-street parking must either be located behind a building or below grade (with entrance from side or rear) and that it be appropriately screened from adjacent residential properties. • encouraging shared driveways and the creation of access easements to parking areas located behind buildings on adjacent lots, in order to reduce the number of potential curb cuts and driveways.
5. Retain the mixed use character of the Street with desired commercial and residential uses (e.g., discourage additional liquor stores, bars, automotive uses, fast food restaurants, and chain stores) and provide incentives for creating additional housing units.		<p>ZAC should consider recommending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the addition of a threshold of a certain floor area size for restaurants and retail establishments over which threshold a special permit and Planning Board review will be required, and the addition of a requirement for a minimum distance between restaurants defined as fast food, in order to discourage clusters of fast food restaurants; • the addition of a special setback requirement for automotive uses which would require that the building (or portion of the building) which contains the automotive uses be located behind the building (or portion of the building) which fronts on the street and contains non-automotive uses; • the creation of an incentive to allow an increase in the potential floor area ratio or density of housing if a certain percentage of units are made affordable; • the creation of an incentive to allow an increase in the potential floor area ratio for commercial uses on sites that also provide housing units (possibly with a requirement for a certain

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
		<p>percentage of affordable units) on upper floors;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reduction or elimination of the minimum lot width, side yard and open space requirements for residential uses in the Business A District so as to encourage residential uses. • Residents and neighborhood associations should participate in the review of applications for uses which already require a special permit and public review, such as fast food restaurants and service stations, should monitor the exchange of liquor licenses under the existing cap, and should participate in the review of applications before the License Commission.

HOUSING

Background

The housing stock, like that of the City of Cambridge as a whole, is fairly old, with nearly 65% of the housing units in the Cambridge Street Census Area having been built before 1940. Most of the residential buildings in the Cambridge Street area are single, two and three family dwellings, or mixed use buildings containing apartments above the first floor. According to housing sales data for 1995, the median price of a single family home in the East Cambridge and Wellington-Harrington neighborhoods is \$128,900, a two family home is \$142,600, and a three family home is \$195,100.

Based on recent census data, most residents in the Cambridge Street Census Area¹ are tenants, not homeowners. Cambridge Street has many long-time residents; approximately one-third of households in the Census Area have lived there for more than 10 years. (Additional demographic data for the Cambridge Street area is contained in Appendix F.)

In addition to small scale housing, the Cambridge Street area also offers larger residential developments. Market rate buildings include The Pavillion (114 units) and Thomas Graves Landing (166 units). The Cambridge Street study area has 1,200 units of affordable housing. Large scale affordable housing developments include: Inman Square Apartments (116 units), Roosevelt Towers (199 units), Millers River Apartments (303 units). Smaller sized affordable and subsidized housing developments include: Truman Apartments, Putnam School, and Harwell Homes.

Roosevelt Towers is currently undergoing renovation and modernization to the units and the grounds that will include a private drive with access to Cambridge Street. Construction will be completed in Fall 1997. There will be approximately 50 available units upon completion of construction, which

will be offered first to those on the waiting list, although the Cambridge Housing Authority is considering giving preference to area residents.

The community's major concerns about housing include the fear of loss of residential units to commercial developments, displacing existing residents, increasing residential rents (increasing commercial rents too, both of which raise concerns regarding gentrification), change in character of the neighborhood and residents, and substandard housing conditions. Some specific comments include:

"There is a lot of substandard housing in the area. It is important to help small landlords provide housing for poor families. If we fix up buildings, the poor will be ejected and the area will be gentrified." ... "We need decent, well-maintained affordable housing and common open space." ... "[Cambridge Street should be] a diverse community of short term and long term residents of different ages, races and family structure make up" ... "A safe, affordable community of neighbors with room for families, elderly, disabled and working people of modest means."

¹ The Cambridge Street "Census Area" includes Neighborhood 1 (East Cambridge), Neighborhood 3 (Wellington-Harrington) and a single census tract in Neighborhood 6 (Mid-Cambridge).

Goals and Actions

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
<p>1. Maintain the character of the Cambridge Street neighborhood as a place where the elderly, families, immigrants, households of a variety of types, and people of a variety of economic means, can find rental and home ownership opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cambridge Street area residents and businesses should form a committee or neighborhood association which will have an active role in the review of proposed developments throughout the neighborhood. Eligible Cambridge Street area residents should contact CDD and Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) to place themselves on affordable housing waiting lists. CDD should continue to aggressively market local home ownership opportunities to Cambridge Street neighborhood residents. CDD and non-profit housing agencies should do target marketing of City financing and housing programs to owners of rental properties in the Cambridge Street area. CDD should market to Cambridge Street area residents its home ownership programs, including the Condo Buyer Initiative and First Time Home Buyer Programs. <p>Cambridge Street area residents should call CDD at 349-HOME for additional housing assistance and referrals to programs such as the State's Accessible Housing Registry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHA should consider adopting a policy to give preference to Cambridge Street neighborhood residents for placement as units become available (e.g., Roosevelt Towers). The City should encourage and support the development of a variety of forms of home ownership, which may include: limited equity co-ops, resident management model (e.g., 402 Rindge Avenue), integrated community housing for disabled persons, co-housing, and community-based nonprofit housing.
<p>2 Preserve existing housing stock and increase resources to meet the demand for affordable housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDD should continue to request, through mailings and meetings with owners of rental properties in the Cambridge Street area, efforts to minimize hardship (e.g., smaller rent increases) for lower income tenants. CDD and CHA should continue to provide technical (including financial information, referrals, etc.) assistance to tenants and owners of existing subsidized housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cambridge Street area residents and/or neighborhood associations should note substandard housing units and monitor recent sales listings, in order to identify properties for rehabilitation and creation of affordable housing opportunities (by acquisition) by non-profit housing agencies and CDD. Residents and CDD should advocate to Federal, State and City government for increased resources for affordable housing, to establish policies that will result in a reliable/continual source of funding, which may include a luxury real estate transfer fee

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDD should continue its efforts to preserve existing subsidized housing (e.g., Inman Square Apartments, Harwell Homes). 	<p>and the issuance of a municipal housing bond, and to establish a Citywide requirement that a certain percentage of units in new market rate developments should be set aside as affordable units (inclusionary zoning).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDD should encourage the retention of the existing housing supply and the addition of housing units, where possible, on and around Cambridge Street, including the area between Sciarappa and First Streets. CDD should explore the possibility of working with the owners of existing undeveloped properties in the Cambridge Street area (e.g., at Cambridge and Columbia Streets, and Cambridge and Sciarappa Streets) for construction of housing units or mixed use developments (commercial ground floor with housing units above).

TRANSPORTATION

Background

Cambridge Street is a two-way, primarily two lane, principal east-west route which extends from Massachusetts Avenue at Harvard Square in the west to Lechmere Square and O'Brien Highway in the east. Public transportation is provided by the MBTA #69 bus which travels between Harvard and Lechmere Squares along the Street. Inman and Lechmere Squares are transportation centers with multiple bus lines converging at both. The MBTA provides train service at Lechmere Station, the end of the Green Line.

Primary Concerns

Transportation issues emerged as the arena of greatest dissatisfaction for Cambridge Street residents and businesses. The major transportation concerns of residents and merchants in the Cambridge Street area include the need to improve safety and circulation for all users of the Street (pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles), to examine the allocation of parking for customers, visitors, employees, and Cambridge Street residents; to separate pedestrians from buses and fix up Lechmere Station; to better maintain crosswalks and sidewalks; and to improve enforcement of violations.

Parking

There are three municipal parking lots in the Cambridge Street area, not including the parking garage in East Cambridge. The lot on Springfield Street has 30 spaces, two of which are designated for handicapped parking. The lot on Windsor Street has 20 spaces and the lot between Warren and Marion Streets has 34 spaces. Due to demands for use and space, it is difficult to provide long term parking for businesses, although the municipal lot between Warren and Marion Streets has 25 four-hour meters and nine 10-hour meters.

The parking survey conducted by CDD and Advisory Committee members in November 1996 looked at parking usage and turnover of spaces at five different times in the same weekday (8 AM, 11 AM, 2 PM, 5 PM, and 8 PM). At all reporting times, the Springfield Street had some available parking spaces, although at 8 PM, only the handicapped spaces were unoccupied. The lot on Windsor Street always had some available spaces; at its busiest times, 11 AM and 8 PM, there were two and five unoccupied spaces, respectively. At both of these lots, there were also a few illegally parked cars that were noted, as well as a few instances of feeding of meters (i.e., no overturn after the two hour maximum). The Warren/Marion lot always had available spaces. At its busiest time, 8 PM, there were still three unoccupied spaces.

There are approximately 285 on-street parking spaces along Cambridge Street in the study area (including approximately 10 handicapped parking spaces). Parking surveys were conducted on the following blocks (locations surveyed were determined by participant interest, avoidance of on-street construction, and reported parking shortages):

- Cambridge Street (south side), from Cardinal Medeiros Avenue to Berkshire Street: There are seven legal parking spaces along this block. There were at least two parking spaces that were unoccupied at all reporting times. Illegal parking was noted at the bus stop and in the loading zone.
- Cambridge Street (south side), from Fifth to Sixth Street: There are 10 legal parking spaces along this block. Other than at 5 PM (the busiest time), there were between one and five available spaces (average of two). At 5 PM, all spaces were occupied, plus two cars were double parked, and cars were parked at the fire hydrant and blocking a driveway. A few times during the day, cars were parked at the hydrant and one time at the bus stop. A few spaces were occupied beyond the two hour maximum.
- Cambridge Street (north side), from Third to Sciarappa Street: There are 10 legal parking spaces along this block. At each of the five survey times, there was always at least one car, and a few times three cars, parked in the

bus stop, and there was always at least two unoccupied legal parking spaces. A few times, it was noted that cars were parked in the loading zone. Some meter feeding was also observed.

Concerning parking availability, on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), the average of the responses to the resident survey was 3 and to the business survey was 2; both residents and businesses gave 1 as their most frequent answer. Of those residents surveyed who own their own homes, nearly 90% also own vehicles (average of 1.4 vehicles per household). Only 55% of respondents who rent their homes also own vehicles (average of 1.3 vehicles per household). About half of the residents surveyed park their vehicles overnight in private or rented off-street parking spaces. Slightly fewer than half park in resident permit parking areas and about 5% park at on-street meters.

According to the business survey, most businesses have an employee who travels to work by car. Many also have an employee who walks to work. The breakdown of responses is:

- Car 85% (4 businesses specifically mentioned that employees participate in a car pool)
- Walk 41%
- T 22%
- Bus 13%
- Bicycle 13%

Of those employees traveling by car, 40% reportedly park in rented or private off-street parking spaces, another 40% park at meters (municipal lots and on-street spaces), and 14% park in resident permit parking. In Inman Square, of the responding businesses, fewer than one out of five stated that it has employees who regularly park at meters. Of the businesses in the rest of the study area, half of the businesses have employees who park in rented, private, or resident permit parking, and half have employees who park at meters.

Loading

Regarding on-street loading, the majority of the businesses responding to the business survey stated that there is a sufficient number of on-street loading spaces. The merchants indicated the usual location of their businesses' loading/unloading activities:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| • On-street parking space | 41% |
| • On-street loading zone | 33% |
| • Private loading zone or driveway | 9% |
| • Bus stop or double park | 6% |
| • Response not provided | 11% |

Safety and Circulation

In the business and resident surveys, the respondents indicated that safety and circulation is better for pedestrians than it is for vehicles and bicycles along Cambridge Street. On a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), the average business response was 6 and the most frequent business response rated the area an 8 concerning pedestrian safety and circulation. The average response of residents was only 5, while the most frequent response was also 8. For vehicle traffic safety and circulation, the average and most frequent business response was 6. Residents feel the area is worse and rated vehicle traffic with an average response of 4 and a most frequent response of 1. Concerning bicycle safety and circulation, the average and most frequent business response was 5, while residents rated it even lower with an average of 4 and most frequent response of 1.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee are outlined in the text below. Two ideas which cannot be implemented came up with enough frequency to merit discussion. The first was a request for the construction of a pedestrian overpass across Cambridge Street at the Lechmere T. This idea is not feasible for a number of reasons: it would be very expensive, it would have a negative visual impact on the street around it, which is a gateway to Cambridge; it would not meet ADA standards for access by the disabled, and would have questionable safety impacts,

encouraging cars to travel faster because pedestrians are overhead, thus making the street even more unsafe for those pedestrians who must cross at grade. Furthermore, to build such a structure, more land would be required than is available on the sidewalk.

Although this option can not be endorsed, the City is committed to seeking other means to achieve its goal of improving safety for pedestrians crossing Cambridge Street at First Street. To this end, the City is installing a new sidewalk with trees and a neckdown at the intersection and will refer this intersection to the traffic consultant to be hired as part of the next phase of the project.

The other frequent suggestion that cannot be endorsed was that the City should either buy land for parking garages or build parking decks on top of the existing municipal parking lots. Unfortunately, the existing lots are too small to accommodate decking, which requires space consuming ramps. In the foreseeable future, the suggestion of building structured parking is not feasible for a number of reasons including prohibitive cost, which would come at the expense of implementing the other recommendations of the Cambridge Street Action Plan, and the City's agreement to meet the standards of the Federal Clean Air Act, which commits the City to reducing auto travel. However, a number of the recommendations outlined below are intended to improve access to the existing parking supply.

Goals and Actions

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
<p>1. Create a transportation system that supports the recommended streetscape improvements and improves the safety and circulation of pedestrian, bicycle and motor vehicle users of Cambridge Street.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should hire an urban design and transportation consulting team to integrate and study the transportation and streetscape beautification goals. The Consultant will work with the City to review base conditions and to develop improvements. The following key intersections should be considered for study: Cambridge Street/Columbia Street; Cardinal Medeiros Avenue/Cambridge Street/Warren Street; Fulkerson Street/Cambridge Street/Lambert Street; Cambridge Street/Third Street; Cambridge Street/First Street; Inman Square. • Cardinal Medeiros/Cambridge Street/Warren Street intersection: review accident statistics, consider ways to improve visibility and safety including realignment of the intersection, moving the crosswalk, moving the mailboxes, and signalization, and consider the potential impact of improvements to this intersection. • Fulkerson Street/Cambridge Street/Lambert Street intersection: consider curb extensions, moving the crosswalk, moving the traffic signal to Fulkerson Street, and other ways to improve safety and circulation. • Cambridge Street/Third Street intersection: assess the need for improved signalization, signage, and pavement markings. • Cambridge Street/First Street intersection: assess the need for improved signalization, signage, and pavement markings. • Inman Square: assess the need for improved signalization, signage, and pavement markings. • TPT should improve the signalization timing at the following Cambridge Street intersections: Sixth Street, Third Street, Second Street, First Street and O'Brien Highway. • The City should consider improvements for pedestrians in the Cambridge Street area (especially at the Harrington School and Millers River Apartments), including improved or additional crosswalks, pedestrian crossing signals, curb extensions, and handicap accessible sidewalks and ramps at street corners. • The City should assess the options for enhancements for bicyclists in the Cambridge Street area, including bicycle 	

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
	<p>lanes or guide lines and bicycle parking facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDD should promote and encourage participation in its program that discounts the cost for property owners to provide “post & ring” bike racks in front of their properties. 	
<p>3. Seek to improve the availability of parking (day and evening) for shoppers, visitors, residents, merchants, and employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TPT) should seek to expand the parking supply through curbside reallocation (relocate meter poles, review loading zones, review bus stops, review cab stands, review curb cuts, and review hydrant locations). • The City’s Transportation Demand Management (TDM) staff should assist interested merchants with identifying and developing transportation alternatives for employees. 	
<p>4. Improve and modernize signage along Cambridge Street.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should hire an urban design and transportation consulting team to integrate and consider all of the Committee’s goals concerning signage. • Following review of the curbside regulations, the City should replace all of the existing regulatory signs along Cambridge Street with updated signs. • The City should consider providing directional signage to indicate the location of municipal parking lots and new signs within the parking lots. • The City should make recommendations regarding developing distinctive street signs for Cambridge Street that would demarcate the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should consider adding signage in or near crosswalks which identifies that State Law requires vehicles to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.
<p>5. Improve the physical condition and maintenance of the street and sidewalks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPT should continue the current maintenance schedule for repainting crosswalks two times per year and assess the maintenance schedule following the repavement of the Street. • The City should seek funding for the resurfacing of Cambridge Street, the repair of sidewalks, and the improvement of pavement markings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood associations should write letters to the owners of Twin City Plaza to request that a raised sidewalk be installed in place of the existing painted sidewalk at the entrance to the shopping center off of Gore Street near Lambert Street.

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents and businesses should report repair and maintenance needs to DPW: pothole repair/sidewalk obstruction hotline 349-4854; snow and ice removal hotline 349-4903; streetlights and other repairs 349-4800. DPW should review current conditions of street and sidewalk cleanliness. 	

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Background

Many businesses want to see more festivals, better promotion of their businesses, and an improvement to the image and visitors' perceptions of Cambridge Street. Most of the businesses surveyed said that they may want to join a new business association for the Cambridge Street area if it had concrete purposes, functions, and operations. Currently, the majority of the businesses believe that Cambridge Street serves more than just the immediate neighborhood, and that the market area served includes the nearby communities. Some of the businesses, such as the restaurants, have regional appeal. A few merchants noted that former residents will frequently return to the area to attend church, shop, and visit.

Approximately one half of the businesses which responded to the survey have been in business for more than 20 years. Less than 30% of the responding businesses are owned by Cambridge residents and half of them live in the neighborhood. Most of the responding businesses have employees who are

City residents; roughly 30% have employees who live in the Cambridge Street neighborhood.

Of the 54 business survey respondents, 34 lease their spaces. Of those 34, 22 provided the price range of their rents. The annual rents ranged from \$3-\$25 per square foot of floor space and were evenly distributed in the categories of \$5-9, \$10-14, and \$15-20. The higher rents tended to be in Inman Square and in East Cambridge near the Court House. Most reported that their floor space was less than 2,000 square feet; the majority are between 500-1,500 square feet. Only a handful of businesses have floor space which is greater than 5,000 square feet in size.

In terms of business assistance needs, many businesses said the following would be most helpful: marketing and promotions advice, financial assistance with building repairs, and new signs. Twenty businesses stated that their buildings needed minor exterior repairs and 11 said major exterior repairs are needed. Other prevalent answers included new equipment, computer training, and loan assistance or financial advice.

Goals and Actions

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
1. Improve the image of the Cambridge Street business environment by coordinating resources for activities such as joint marketing, public relations and festivals, by advocating for improvements to the business district, and through maintenance of an appropriate commercial mix.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interested businesses should form a Cambridge Street business association.The Chamber of Commerce and CDD should provide information about the Cambridge Street area to entrepreneurs and business people looking for business locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interested businesses should contact the Harvard Square Business Association, Central Square Business Association, and Chamber of Commerce for advice on starting a business association.Interested businesses should survey other businesses regarding their interest in a business association and potential purposes and functions.Business Association should establish a sliding scale for dues, possibly based on size of business or business income, so that small businesses can afford to participate.Some activities the Business Association could undertake include: coordinate applications to the Department of Public Works (DPW) for planters and/or café seating on sidewalks; encourage

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
		<p>businesses to extend their hours; set up a system of block captains to monitor and report necessary street and sidewalk repairs, garbage pick up problems, tree maintenance needs, etc. to DPW; organize a holiday decoration program for the Street and its gateways; contact local youth groups to get them involved in efforts to improve the Street, such as clean-up day, painting, design of Street logo, etc.; encourage residents and businesses to show pride in the area and take responsibility for keeping sidewalk and gutter areas clean; emphasize the ethnic diversity of the Street in promotional activities, marketing materials, and through the encouragement of new ethnic businesses; work with merchants, churches, and ethnic clubs to encourage and sponsor festivals; improve their marketing, either individually, or in clusters; increase the promotion of the Street and its businesses; contact tour bus companies to encourage them to travel along Cambridge Street; monitor vacancies and recruit desired businesses and uses to fill vacant spaces; contact local artists through the Cambridge Arts Council regarding space available for artists studios and coordinating the display of art in windows of vacant storefronts; promote the use of public transportation for employees and patrons; serve as liaisons to the City.</p>
<p>2. Support the small businesses on Cambridge Street through targeted business assistance programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDD should market existing CDD programs to Cambridge Street businesses including: Cambridge Street Facade Improvement Program (349-4637), Cambridge Business Loan Fund (349-4618), and CDD's Small Business Assistance Program (marketing, loan and financial, business operations advice) (349-4618). • CDD should market other programs that could serve small businesses including the East Cambridge Savings Bank's Cambridge Street Facade Improvement Loan Program (354-7700), the Cambridge Employment Program (547-6648), the City's Office of Workforce Development (349-6234), the Cambridge Business Development Center (349-4690), and state quasi-public financing agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Association should seek free computer training and donations of equipment from large local companies and local colleges and universities who are interested in supporting local small businesses.

GOALS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER
<p>3. Improve visibility of Cambridge Street through signage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDD should hire and refer suggestions to urban design Consultant for consideration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should make sure Cambridge Street signs on Street and O'Brien Highway are visible to alleviate confusion as to where Cambridge Street is located. • The Consultant should consider changing the street signs along Cambridge Street to a color other than the existing green (or change the shape or printing of the signs), so as to distinguish the Cambridge Street corridor as a special area. Other suggestions to consider: block numbers could be added to the signs so as to improve patrons' ability to locate destinations; street signs could be put on more than one corner of an intersection, and street signs could be installed overhanging the Street on existing traffic poles at major intersections. • The Consultant should consider adding directional signs (with arrows) along Cambridge Street, particularly at major intersections and gateways, to indicate "Inman Square," "Lechmere," "Harvard Square" and "Cambridge Street." • The Consultant should consider emphasizing the gateway (at Lechmere and First Street) through streetscape improvements. • The Consultant should consider the idea of hanging a banner at the gateways and/or a coordinated system of banners on light poles or buildings to make Cambridge Street more inviting.

NEXT STEPS

It is important to make clear that some of the actions within this Plan may take a few years to implement or construct (such as changes to transportation patterns, pavement markings, crosswalks, and lighting, and/or other improvements that may need to wait for the completion of the consulting team's plan), some actions may be possible in the near term without the consultant's plan (such as improved park maintenance, better marketing of available building rehabilitation programs, formation of a business association, and studying revisions to the zoning regulations), and some will be ongoing (such as clean up efforts, improved marketing of area businesses, and participation in existing business assistance programs). CDD will continue to work with other City Departments to respond to the goals and recommendations of the Committee. Several of the actions will require the continued involvement and/or initiative of Cambridge Street residents and merchants.

CDD and the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee anticipate that the City will shortly hire an urban design and transportation consulting team to work with a working committee of residents, business people, property owners, and City staff to prepare a plan for physical improvements to Cambridge Street. Opportunities for further public involvement include the zoning advisory committee, the committee that will work with the consulting team, and the formation of a business association. CDD will also continue with existing programs for Cambridge Street, such as the Cambridge Street Facade Improvement Program. During the Summer of 1997, the sidewalk in front of the Lechmere T station will be rebuilt, a neckdown at the intersection of First Street will be installed, and 7 trees will be planted along it.

The Consultant will take about nine months to develop a conceptual plan for the streetscape and traffic improvements to Cambridge Street. Once this plan is complete, the Community Development Department will seek funding to construct the improvements as part of its Fiscal 1999 budget year. It is expected that throughout this period, the corridor will continue to show improvements as facades are redesigned, as businesses in the district

undertake joint marketing programs, as vacancies are filled with desired retailers. The creation of the Cambridge Street Action Plan is a stop along the way, not the end point of the planning process.